

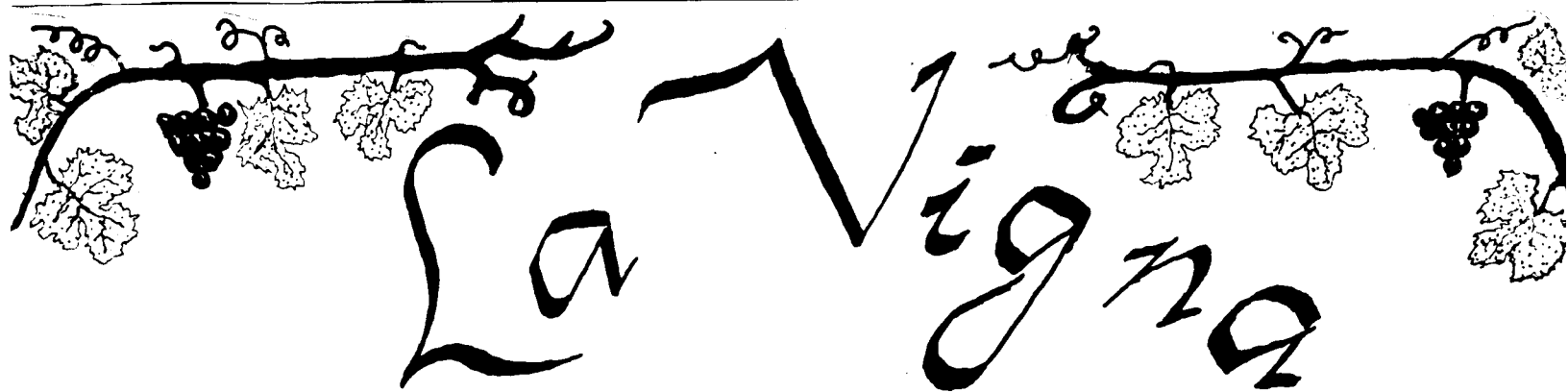


Photo:
Antonio
Chianese
manning the
ovens at 48
Bayard Street's
Economy Bakery.
Taken '37 by
Leo Chianese

MY UNCLE - THE QUIET ONE
BY LEO D. CHIANESE

My uncle, Antonio Chianese (Zi'Tonio) was the oldest of my father's brothers. So it was he that blazed the trail to America (Trenton) for the family. He lived with Zi'Matteo on the 200 block of Elmer St, scrimping and saving so he could send money to Italy to pay for the voyage of Uncle Luigi, my grandpop Leopoldo, grandmom Eugenia, his sisters, Carolina and Rachela and my father, Angelo. I don't really know how he managed it, but the family's voyage to America was paid for by money he saved, with the possible exception of my aunt Carolina, whose trip was probably paid for by my uncle Nicola Bilancio. It was common practice in those days for the future husband or boyfriend of a girl to pay their way over here so they could marry. (My mother, Assunta, was one of those girls whose way was paid for by Pop, thereby obligating her to marry him). *

Zi'Tonio worked 10 to 12 hours a day in Sloan's Carpet factory and walked to and from work so he could save the money to send to Italy. He once told me that in those days he ate pasta e fagioli, fagioli e pasta, every day. Although he made very little money, he managed not only to get his family over to America, but to buy two houses in a very short period of time: 326 and 320 Elmer St. I was born in his house on 326 Elmer and lived

there until I was 12. Pop was a baker and worked nights and slept days. Therefore Zi'Tonio took his place. On the cold winter evenings, my cousins Jennie and Carmel and my brother Pat and I would gather around the coal stove and Zi'Tonio would tell us stories of his experiences when he served in the Italian Army. He also told us other fictional stories of war and love. In my later years, I realized that Zi'Tonio probably made most of the stories up as he went along. He had served in the Italian Army in peacetime for the required one year and therefore had seen more of life than any of his family. For a night snack, he would toast bread in the coal stove, then put olive oil, pepper, a little salt and rub raw garlic over the bread or bake some potatoes in the stove while he told us stories (Ummmm, GOOD).

Zi'Tonio, in spite of his lack of schooling, could fix almost anything. Many were the Saturdays and Sundays I would help him fix a sink, put ropes in the windows or fix a door lock. Many were the days I held the ladder while he painted the cornices of the two houses he owned and my father's house on 26 Clark St. We both scraped and painted the roofs of those houses. The only thing he would not tackle was the electricity in a house. I believe my experience working with him on the houses gave me the nerve to eventually build my own house on Kinter Ave. in 1949.

When the Colonial Bakery started, it was a company composed of about 30 men who had contributed money to get it started. My father, Uncle Luigi, Uncle Nicola Bilancio and Zi'Tonio were part of the company. They had weekly meetings on Sunday and occasionally I was present. The meetings were very explosive with everyone talking loud and long. But Zi'Tonio was a very quiet person with very little to say; when he did say something, it fell like thunder on the ears of the listeners and the words were very well thought out. (cont. p.6)

*PICNIC**PICNIC**PICNIC*****

Let's have a La Vigna picnic for all the branches of the family tree and friends. A picnic organizing committee is needed. La Vigna is willing to help volunteers from each family to get in touch with one another. Potential picnickers, please telephone the following people by May 1:

Lucy Gervasio	585-8337
Angelo Chianese	396-7719
Lean & Cio Acquaviva	393-4316

* (Editor's note: LA VIGNA has it on good authority that this was, in fact, not the case for Carolina Chianese Bilancio. The authority: Nicola and Carolina's daughter, Rosa Bilancio.

In Memory of
Erminia D. Martini
1886-1984

At age 98 Erminia DiSossi Martini joined her Creator on December 26, 1984. Many have benefitted from her love and generosity.

Erminia and her husband Crescenzo came to live at the crowded Bilancio home, 252 Elmer Street about 1933. The Martini couple occupied a newly constructed upstairs bedroom, shared the Bilancio kitchen and living room. Mr. Martini operated a little store front business on the first floor, while Erminia continued working as a sewing machine operator at H.D. Lee Co. Carolina Bilancio and Erminia quickly became close friends...."just like sisters" Carolina's daughter Jennie states. Erminia was to become very helpful to the ailing Carolina.

About the time the Martini's moved in with the Bilancio's, the sickly Carolina gave birth to her last child, Lorraine. As her sickness worsened, disturbing her nightly sleep, Erminia would oftentimes go to Carolina's bedroom and relieve her of the newly born child. Carolina was most appreciative for the respite and the chance to get some urgently needed rest. Six months prior to her untimely death, apparently realizing her end was near, Carolina asked her friend Erminia, if anything were to happen to her, to please look after her infant daughter. Erminia lovingly acceded to her "sisterly" friend's request. Carolina Bilancio was greatly relieved. When her end came she left her husband Nicola and six children ranging in ages of 1½ to 20. Although not Lorraine's biological mother, Erminia, true to her promise, became as close to a real mother as is humanly possible.

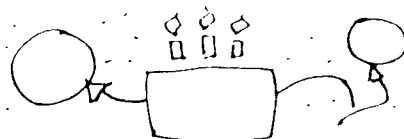
Erminia was an amazing person. She was loving, perceptive, wise, worldly and an excellent Italian cook. "Mom would oftentimes say to Crescenzo that he looked all over Italy for the best cook, found Erminia and married her." My wife Jennie will tell you, adding "Crescenzo would acknowledge Mom's comments with a loving, knowing smile."

I first got to know Erminia about forty-five years ago when courting Jennie. I loved, admired and respected her greatly. She was a most unusual person.



Erminia Martini and Lorraine Anthony
Ca. '47

HAPPY BIRTHDAY



APRIL 1	Susan Chianese Slaninka
7	Joe Chianese
10	Jim MacLeod
11	Mary Armenti
14	Jane Chianese
16	Fran Bilancio
17	Leo Chianese
19	Bobbi Wiesner
20	Joe Gervasio
24	Joe Garzio
27	Julianne Wiesner Chianese
MAY 1	Willie Bilancio
11	Jacalyn Anthony
11	Pat Chianese
26	Chris Chianese
30	Brent Schutts
JUNE 9	Jennie Immordino
13	Terri Klepzynski
14	Gary Wayne Schultz
18	Dominic Gervasio
19	Roberta Immordino
25	Daniel Cohen
25	Paul Slaninka
26	Ira G. Roberts Bilancio
26	Claudia Schutts
30	Gary Chianese

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY



APRIL 14	Leo and Louise Chianese
MAY 14	Carmen and Phyllis Armenti
24	Claudia and Brent Schutts
JUNE 4	Robert and Susan Chianese
25	Joe and Fred Esposito

Erminia was born on March 9, 1886 in Calabria, Italy. She emigrated to the U.S. about 1916 and a year later began to work at H.D. Lee Overalls Company. Thirty five years later, in 1952, she retired. She became a U.S. citizen in 1944 at age 57.

This fine lady from Italy made life for many of us, pleasant, happy, meaningful. Her kindness, love, sensitivity and...her cooking touched the lives of those of us who had the privilege of knowing her.. To paraphrase an English writer "The work of a good woman is like a stream of underground water silently making the ground green." This Angel of our Earth has left us to join the Angels of Heaven.

Sleep in peace, Bella. You earned eternal rest.

Note: Most of the above information was provided by my wife Jennie Bilancio Immordino.

Robert B. Immordino

NOTE TO READERS

This issue starts the second year of La Vigna. Our first year was a good one and for our continued success we are counting on all of us (that includes YOU) to keep La Vigna alive and wearing a healthy glow. Perhaps you would like to do something, to get involved, but aren't sure quite how. If so, contact any of the people listed below who will be delighted to speak to you and suggest how to get involved in a small or big way, whichever you choose. This big project of creating a family paper takes a lot of effort but gives back so much in the way of news, togetherness and fun.

You may notice that this spring issue of La Vigna looks different from our last issues, not quite as consistent in visual format. In the past, Clothilda Bilancio Acquaviva has generously and expertly typed all of La Vigna (and we mean all). Due to a pinched nerve, Clo hasnot been able to type this issue, so various family members have typed the articles. Typing a whole issue of La Vigna is too big a job for one person anyway, so we aremaking a plea (help!) for typists. We cannot publish La Vigna without typists so please contact us if you can lend La Vigna your fingers.

Corinne Bilancio 881-0911
Or Lew Bilancio "

Corinne Bilancio

Fran Bilancio and
Angelica Roberts 392-0982

Dean & Clo Acquaviva 393-4316
Angelo Chianese 396-7719
2/7/85

Dear Corrine, Clara and Dean,

We thoroughly enjoy La Vigna and and appreciate the love and energy that goes into every issue.

The following poem was sent to me in March of 1980 to commemorate my 33rd birthday. It was written in Atlanta, Georgia by my beloved cousins Fran, Ivan and Jane Bilancio, my dear Uncle Leo and Aunt Dorothy Bilancio, and very loving person, Angelica Roberts. It made my birthday extra special and I'd like to share it with the readers of La Vigna.

SURPRISE PARTY

We sure wish you were here with us
'Cause we'd like some cake without the fuss.
Champagne, ice cream, gifts, and noise,
Cookies and milk and brand new toys!
Robert'd be here, just in from the coast,
Saluting your health, and making a toast.
Amid loud cheers and flight of confetti,
Here comes your Mom with a bowl of spaghetti.
We'll dig into the birthday feast
With Jimmy, with Carrie, and Jaime not least.
In thru the door Aunt Rose soon arrives
Carrying a cake that brings light to our eyes.
Sit up straight or make a face
'Cause Uncle Bob's takin' pictures all over the place!!
Dinner is over, we're juiced with champagne's
Now it's time for Birthday games!
Pin the Tail on the Donkey, Blindman's Bluff,
OK! Where's the cake? We've had enough.
Thirty-three candles and a birthday song
Make your wish, you can't be wrong.
Now the party's over we can't delay
We wish you well, and so end our day.



From Atlanta with Love

Cousins: Fran, Jane, Ivan
Uncles: Leo
Aunts: Dorothy
And other poets: Angelica

Looking forward to many more issues of La Vigna,

LOVE,

Carolyn

FIVE SISTERS

(Second in a series)

by ANGELOJOHN CHIANESE

'O focolare: the fireplace! I can still hear my Nana telling me about the warm glow of the dancing flames. The sisters would say the rosary there, but also keep an eye on the walnut-colored pinecones they had gleaned throughout the countryside during the day and brought home to lay beside the fireplace: the radiant heat would crack them open and splay out the tasty treasure concealed within: i pignoli. Did you know that those pignoli you have paid a premium price for or have savored on Italian wedding macaroons came from a special breed of pine tree? I didn't; at least not until I travelled one year to Italy with my 80-year-old Nana and she showed me the trees to look for and took me up to them and told me their secret. What a gift to give me! That and the wisdom of her words and stories. It made clear to me, after all those years of study, why I had worn out my eyes and fingers running through Garzanti's Italian-English Dictionaries. It was, of course, to unlock the cultural treasures of my grandparents' heritage - as well as that of my great aunts and uncles - to understand where I came from; how come my great-grandpop worked all day for the equivalent of three meals and I can buy 2 weeks' groceries with 4 hours' labor.

Great-grandpop D'Angelo knew he'd never be rich. He knew he'd not be able to provide a handsome dowry for any of his daughters. Their natural beauty and honest industry would be their greatest resource; that and their strong faith in life and God. Nana told me that her papa tried, in those hard times of no work and little food, to hit the jackpot that so many Italians were talking about those days: a quick fortune in America! Somehow he got the courage and the money for ship's passage to the U.S.A. Perhaps the money was borrowed on trust.

Nana didn't say how long he stayed in America. She told me only how he looked to her on the day she and her sister Matilda saw him after he returned. They had finished their 10-hour day in the thread factory at Frattamaggiore (they worked for one lira a day - that was before heavy inflation had started to erode and devalue the lira to its present 1800+ lire per U.S. dollar today) and then, there, unexpectedly, he was - "drawn, white and shrunken." Her father had bet the ranch on making it work in America. He had returned home beaten.

There was no future in Casandrino. That much was clear. The daughters would have to make their stand elsewhere if ever they were to hope to live outside the circle of poverty and desperation. But where? Things were hard all over. "Marry them off?" wondered Pasquale. But to whom? Other peasants? Nana remembers her mother's heated warnings to would-be suitors of her five

(cont. next column)



Maria, Angelina, Matilda and Assunta. Photo by: Theresa and Joe Guerra. 1965

treasures: they'd have to heap "l'oro in cop' i scarp'" (gold on top of their shoes) if they wanted to even think about marriage with her daughters...!

It was decided the eldest sister, "Cicella" (Francesca) would stay in Casandrino to care for her aging parents as well as tend to her own family - she later married and had four children: Giovanni, Carolina, Carmella and Teresa (one of whom, Carolina, eventually chose to settle in America and now lives here with her husband, Luigi Capuanno.) Perhaps because she was the eldest, perhaps because of the great responsibilities, perhaps even because of the more severe living conditions (how long can you survive washing the laundry by hand with cold water in winter?), Cicella was the first of the five sisters to die. The other four found new lives, husbands and families in Trenton, New Jersey. (Next time: the sisters - their work, their children, their ways in the New World)

Staff and Writers This Issue

Corinne Bilancio
Lewis Bilancio
Clothilda Acquaviva
Dean Acquaviva
Francis Bilancio
Angelica Roberts
Angelo Chianese
Lucy Gervasio
Lorraine Anthony
Sam Bellardo
Robert Immordino
Antimo (Art) Bilancio
Leo Chianese
Carolyn MacLeod
Mickey Chianese

"Thank You, Thank You, Thank You" for your donations!"

Sam Bellardo
Mary Armenti
Jane & David Vaun Darpinian
Carol MacLeod & Roberta Immordino

ANECDOTES

Art Bilancio Remembers

At Fort Monmouth we were assigned to Co. D803 regiment. After a few days I got the job of company mechanic. I was to see that all the buildings in my company were in good shape and I had to repair all that was damaged or worn out. Sign painting, carpenter work, repair door locks, replace broken windows, etc., etc. In those days the soldier pay was 50 dollars a month, mine was 65 dollars. The officer of my company gave me 4 men to help me do the work I had to do. We were to live in tents until barracks were ready. These tents were square pyramids about 15 ft. high, wooden floors 10 or 12 inches off the grade, 4 beds or bunks in each tent. It was early fall this hot and humid day when we moved in the tent. By luck I was able to take the bed near the opening or entrance. The opening of tent overlapping tent. Rain water could not get in.

One of the soldiers from my tent, Edward Whiteman from Texas, was a good quiet man, later he was one of my helpers. At night time he snored so loud that the tent would shake from the vibration. One of the men from my tent would lift the bunk at one end 6 or 7 inches and drop it on the wooden floors, it would make a loud noise, he stop snoring for 10 or 15 minutes, then resume snoring again. Many times this unusual noise kept me awake for hours. Before he was called in the army he was a farm worker, lived where he worked. When he walked or marched his body went up and down as if one leg was shorter than the other. Phil Hammond, a bartender from Miami, Florida, also one of my helpers, not from the same tent, used to tease Whiteman all the time, call him farm worker, you never seen a city until you came in the army, and that the reason you walk this way is because you are not used to walk on level ground. Whiteman with a "yeah, yeah." he was very strong about 5'8" tall, his wrist almost 2 times bigger

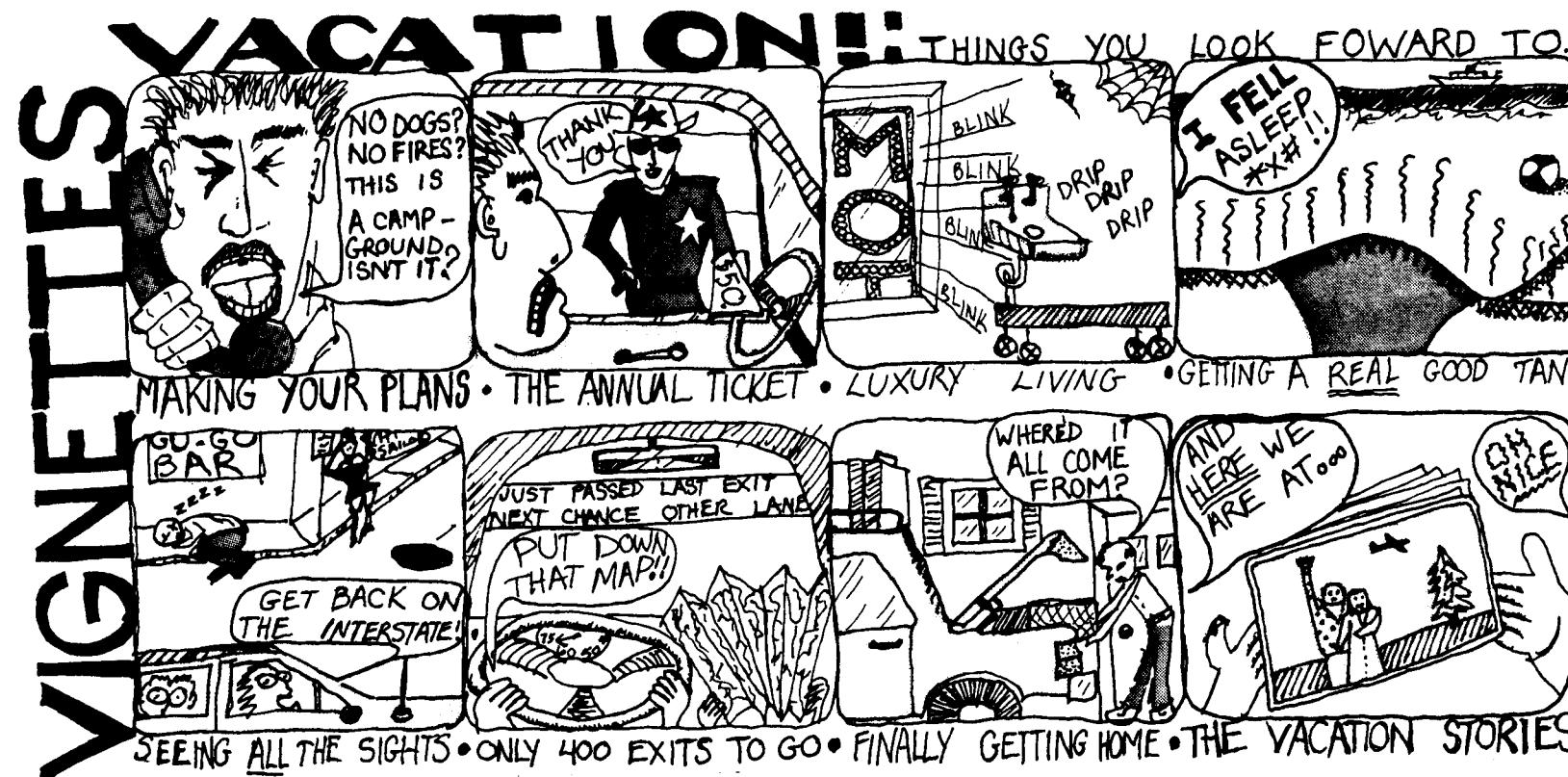
than mine, big large hands. At times when Whiteman had too much to drink was always looking for Hammond. Asking almost everyone in the company where is Hammond, where is Hammond, and the bartender would stay away from him.

In the tent (when it rained outside for a few days) was very miserable. It was cold and damp, in the beginning of November was getting cool. Of course the army beds were warm, the mattress was made to keep the body heat, and all wool blankets kept the cold temperature out.

One evening it was about the middle of December, when I went to bed it was raining lightly. Under the tent everything was cold and damp, in bed after half an hour the bed got warm, I fell asleep. One of the men from my tent did not close the flap of the tent when he came in. During the night it changed from light rain to clear and the temperature dropped to freezing point. My head was near the opening, the entrance. I had enjoyed so much during the hot weather of the end of the summer and the fall. Now that evening my hair was damp, and this morning very cold, I touched my hair and it was crisp. I closed the tent and rubbed my head lightly, for a couple of hours I had a light headache. When we are young nothing bothers us. And sure enough the water outside had a thin coat of ice over it. That day at one of the lectures our company officer told the happy news that our company Co. B was moving into heated barracks that day at 16 hours, that is 4 p.m. We had our large blue bag full of clothes and walked single line about two city blocks to the barracks, I managed to follow Whiteman. Inside the barracks second floor he walked one way and quickly I went the opposite direction and away from the heavy snoring of the night.

Goodbye friends, relatives and editors and readers of La Vigna.

---- will continue ----



NOTES FROM THE GARDEN

by Fran Bilancio

...there's a special providence in the fall of a sparrow.

(HAMLET V.ii.218-19)

All my life it's been my nature or bent of mind to search for, and sometimes find, hidden meanings, symbols and cosmic significance in even the smallest events--the roll of a pebble, the tiny rapids in the stream behind my childhood home on Eggerts Crossing, the aspect of a single marble in my schoolboy collection.

It was late May 1981. Joe Bird, a friend of mine, who like myself had become addicted to the old man, my grandpop Giuseppe, and the ways of his garden, had recently begun his 2,000 mile walk to the Navajo-Hopi Indian Holy Lands. In the cold days of early April, unknown to Grandpop, Joe had brought to the garden an amount of random sticks and twigs, tangled together like a Gordian knot.

Having been students of Grandpop's garden practices for a couple years now, he thought these sticks would be transformed into welcomed warmth for us and the old man by one of his early morning fires.

But the cold weather waned as the days waxed and that pile of sticks stood as a sentinel by the garden gate. Weeds, inaccessible to our hands and hoes, thrived, unchallenged, harbored by this otherwise gracious offering of Joe to our garden life.

As we passed this pile of woody rejects on our way to lunch one day, Grandpop said, "Frankie, deese a stick mak-a trouble for us."

"Trouble? How?" I asked, stopping before the gate. "Work. Eet-a mak-a more work." I knew what he meant. That twisted mangle would defy order, no matter how one might cut it, sort it, stack it, or stick it.

The hottest day later Grandpop ordered a hole to be dug. As was his custom, he marked its perimeter on the ground. "How deep, Grandpop?" "Two-a feet." As I dug, Grandpop stood by indicating with his shovel where each of my shovels full of earth must be placed.

Some time later I climbed out of that 6'x2'x2' ditch. "Frankie, we feenish-a deesa job, but-ta now we got annudder one job." My relative humidity was up and the barometer read STORMY. I didn't have to ask the next question. "Da stick-a, Frankie, da stick!"

These sticks were such that when you grabbed one you grabbed them all. I pushed, pulled and rolled that shapeless, heartless mess of mass until it was finally wrestled into our rectangular hole.

"Frankie, throw-a dirt on top."

I did. But there remained a few arthritic ends, pushing through the earth, reaching still for that hazy, heavy sky.

"Frankie, getta da bigga hammer."

Lifting my hat, I wiped the sweat from

(cont. next column)

my forehead and got the sledge from the shed. "What's this for, Grandpop?"

"Hitta duh stick-a down with."

I gripped its 3' bent persimmon wood handle which he and I had fashioned the year before, and raised the sledge over my head. The weight dropped onto our protuberance of earth and sticks. Hardly a dent. "Hit-ta, Frankie, hit-ta hard!"

Again and again I swung, but to no avail.

"No be afraid, Frankie, geeva more steam!!"

I was hot. I didn't understand this job. The sticks and earth would not allow us satisfaction. "No stop-a Frankie, you gotta do like a devil."

I pounded that dirt and those sticks with three final swings of fury. I knew they would be my last. And they were, for I was out of control. The handle broke. I didn't have to look at him to know his hardened look awaited me and that now useless sledge head stuck in our thwarted labors.

I let that old handle sail through the air. It landed under the pear tree by the well. We didn't speak at all on our way home that evening until I dropped him off on Bert Avenue.

"Tomorrow morning. Nine-a turty."

"Right, Grandpop, nine thirty."

I drove off, those sticks still pushing up out of the earth, myself still pounding dirt, Grandpop still crying, "More-a steam! More-a steam!"

Tomorrow I'll have to fix that hammer. Joe Bird must have been somewhere in Western Pennsylvania by now.

"My Uncle..." (cont. from p.1)

When my father started Economy Bakery, he asked his brothers to help both monetarily and physically. Don't you know, both Zi'Tonio and Zi'Luigi quit their jobs in Sloan's and became bakers. They both also loaned him money at no interest. The picture you see here was taken by me in 1937 when Zi'Tonio worked in my father's bakery. Please notice the large loaves of bread. This bread was baked for the poor families of the neighborhood. Lewis Bilancio, and I later on, used to pick up the dough at the families' homes. My uncles would bake it and we would then deliver them all for 15¢ per large loaf.

I cannot end this story without telling about an incident in Bristol, Pa. My cousins in Fallsington, especially Uncle Jimmy Bellardo and Uncle Julie Bellardo (we used to call them uncles, but actually they were cousins) were very religious persons and belonged to the Church of Christ in Morrisville and Bristol, Pa. On Sunday evenings, they would come to pick my mother, Aunt Angelina, me and whoever else they could get to go to their church up. My father never went because he was always working. Zi'Tonio was not very religious, but one time he was convinced to come along. As they entered the church, the people were greeted by the other part of the congregation that was already there by embraces. The women would hug and kiss each other and the men would also embrace (no kissing). They especially embraced the newcomers. As Zi'Tonio approached

(cont. p.7)



John Johnson
June '85 graduate

JOHN-LOUIS JOHNSON
by Beatrice Bilancio Johnson
(his mother)

John is the son of Beatrice (Bilancio, daughter of Rose and Louis) and Raymond Johnson, named after his grandfathers, John and Louis. He is the brother of Raymond Jr. and Beatrice.

A senior at Lawrence High School, he is a pro in sports. He is most knowledgeable in many types of machinery -- including film equipment.

John's latest endeavor has been working at the Eric Theater. He began as an usher, while learning about other areas of the theater. Four evenings a week he is theater manager.

John will be attending Mercer County Community College this fall. He plans to major in accounting and to play on their soccer team.

We are proud of you, John.

ABRUZZI

The Abruzzi is a region of Italy to the east of Rome and extending to the Adriatic. Considered the northern most region of Southern Italy, it is fast becoming my most favorite spot on the Peninsula. The Abruzzi comprises four provinces bounded by three great mountain ranges; the most impressive of these, the Gran Sasso d'Italia in the province of L'Aquila, contains the highest mountains on the Italian Peninsula. And yet the Abruzzi is much more accessible than say Tuscany or Naples (Campania) because there is so little traffic; and the population (only 122,000) is concentrated in the four major cities. The Abruzzi claims one of the most natural and wild regions in Europe - the Abruzzi National Park. One can enjoy the beauty of this mountaineous region without the congestion, high prices, and pollution found today in our own National Parks. (cont. next col.)

Pescara on the Adriatic, badly destroyed in the second war, has been well restored. There are fine and beautiful beaches north and south of this town along the Adriatic, with many interesting, scenic and atmospheric towns along the way.

Personally, I levitate to the high snow fields in the summer. It is always chilly; heavy sweaters are a must. The region has been opened and developed now for winter skiing. But in the summer it is a delight also with many hiking and walking trails and excursions.

Perhaps the thing I find most pleasing about the Abruzzi is its arts and crafts, especially in the mountain towns. It is most known for its woodworking and metal working (especially gold and silver) but its ceramics and hand-loomed woolen textiles -spreads/coperte and rugs/tappetti - are no where equalled in Italy; perhaps in Umbria only.

I recommend the mountain resort town of Roccorase. For \$14.00 per day per person you may enjoy three home cooked meals a day and a pleasant room with bath at the Hotel Italia. I am sounding like a travel agent but...Nonna does the cooking and if that were not enough the excursions in every direction are both interesting and lovely. Pescocostanza, a town nearby, is simply incredible because of the art work it contains. Arts and crafts still flourish here at a most reasonable cost.

Abruzzi cooking has a distinction all its own: maccheroni all'chitarra, porchetta and agnello, salsicce diverse, formagi Pecorino and Scamorza; on the Adriatic fish is a staple. The cake known as "parozzo" is ubiquitous. The Abruzzi was ruled by the Kingdom of Naples; but one would not know it from the food or its general culture.

If anyone would like further information, I keep a well stocked file and would be happy to extend any of my information on Italy.

Sam Bellardo

(Editor's Note: Samarah Bellardo is the son of the late Elizabeth Golia Bellardo and Lewis Bellardo of Fallington, Pa. His grandmother, Nicolina (Zi''Coline) Migliaccio Bellardo, was a sister to Eugenia Migliaccio Chianese and a greataunt to Rose Bilancio. Dr. Bellardo is a composer of contemporary opera, a graduate of the Julliard School of Music, concert pianist and currently professor of music and composition at Bucks County Community College. He has alternated his busy professional life with summers spent touring and living in Europe in general and Italy in particular over the last decade.)

"My Uncle..." (cont. from p.6)

the door, the first person that greeted him was a woman. Not knowing any better, and because he had seen the women hugging and kissing, he grabbed this lady and kissed her. She said, "NON SI DEVE BACCIARE LE FEMINE!" You can imagine the colors Zi'Tonio's face turned! I was there and could not help laughing. I had been there a couple times before and knew the score.

La Cucina

PIZZA 'SCAROLE

BY MICK CHIANESE

5 to 6 Heads of Escarole
Capers
Pine Nuts (Pignoli)
Anchovies

Olive Oil
Garlic
Bread Dough
Pitted Black Olives

One of my favorite meals that Nana (Assunta) made was Pizza 'Scarole. It was always a very special occasion when we went to 48 Bayard St. for that meal... and it never happened often enough! Well, the years pass and Nana's no longer with us; but my hunger for that dish has never subsided. A couple of years ago I decided that, what the heck, I'll give it a try. You see, I live at 48 Bayard St. now and I cook in a kitchen that's seen thousands of meals. And although I don't cook very often or a great diversity of recipes, what I do cook turns out great - much better than my limited experience should produce. I've always been good with spices, but some of my actions in the kitchen have gone beyond that natural talent. Every once in a while, I'll flavor something a certain way or I'll use a certain technique that I've never used before. It's uncanny! Either I watched a lot closer than I thought when I was younger or someone is there helping me. I think that someone's there.

My first try at pizza 'scarole was like any other first time cooking experience for me: pull out all the ingredients, try to figure out a procedure sequence, stumble through each step, and voilà! Poof! A masterpiece!

After finishing, I tested it out on the family. Uncle Leo (Chianese) happened to stop by that fateful day by some lucky chance (he probably sniffed it out from Cream-ridge) and was the first guinea (sorry) pig. I asked him, with great anticipation, "How is it and what's missing?" It was worth making it just to see the smile on his face that day. But lo and behold - there was something missing: pignoli! Of course, no one in the family complained about the missing ingredient, but the next batch was made complete with the pine nuts. It's a wonder they're part of the recipe at all at the price they get for them! Anyway, the recipe I've written may not be a perfect one, but then again, where would the fun be without improvisation?

First, wait till escarole is a good price; then buy it. Separate the leaves of the escarole and cut once or twice to make the pieces bite-size. If left whole, they tend to be a bit stringy after cooking. Boil water in a large saucepan, leaving enough room in the pan to add a considerable amount of escarole. Lightly salt the water if you so desire. Feel the escarole to soften. The escarole will be a dull green when it's done. I also throw a couple of pieces of garlic into the water for good measure. (You may want to start stretching the dough out while the escarole is cooking. The finished pies will be in a square pan about three inches deep. There will be a dough bottom and top to the pizza. I'm not including a recipe for dough here, mainly because I have never tried to make bread. Besides, I live within a 2-minute walk of four bakeries where fresh dough is available). Use a collander to drain the escarole, squeezing out as much water as possible. Next mix in garlic (heavy), olive oil (moderate), anchovies (to taste), pine nuts (to budget), capers (sparingly) and black olives (freely). Tasting this mixture before loading it into the pan will give you a fairly good idea of what the final product will taste like.

After filling the pan with the mixture, top it with the cover layer of dough and pinch the ends to seal it. Place it in the oven at 350° for 20 to 30 minutes or until you just can't wait for it to finish cooking, whichever comes first. This dish is very good cold as well and is one of my favorite breakfast treats. Mangia!

***** Deadline for the July issue is June 1 *****

Send your summer news and closeup photos to: **LaVigna**
90 Eggerts Road
Lawrenceville, NJ 08648

La Vigna
90 Eggerts Road
Lawrenceville, N.J.

